

From The Age of Monologue To The Age of Global Dialogue

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I. Background

Humankind today at the beginning of the Third Millennium is truly at the cusp of a huge transition in human history at least as profound—and even much more fundamental, I would argue—than even the Axial Period of 800-200B.C.E.,² when the broad human consciousness which has persisted since throughout the whole world up to almost today was created. This massive paradigm shift,³ which toward the end of the 20th century my friend Ewert Cousins perceived and named the Second Axial Period,⁴ is beginning to be seen now as even more profound, for there is at its very foundation a 180° *volte face*, fundamentally reversing the basic orientation of *all*

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²Karl Jaspers, *The Origin and Goal of History*, trans. Michael Bullock (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953); *Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte* (Zurich: Artemis, 1949). For further academic discussion of Jaspers' position on the Axial Period, see *Wisdom, Revelation, and Doubt: Perspectives on the First Millennium B.C.*, *Daedalus* (Spring, 1975); and *The Origins and Diversity of Axial Age Civilizations*, ed. S.N. Eisenstadt (New York: State University of New York Press, 1989).

³Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2nd ed., 1970).

⁴Ewert Cousins, "Judaism-Christianity-Islam: Facing Modernity Together," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 30:3-4 (Summer-Fall, 1993), pp. 417-425. For a more comprehensive treatment of Cousins' concept of the Second Axial Period, see *Christ of the 21st Century* (Rockport, MA: Element, 1992).

understanding. In short, humankind at the beginning of the Third Millennium is leaving behind the *from-the-beginning* “Age of Monologue” and inchoatively entering the “Age of Global Dialogue”!

In human history things do not change like a light switch being flipped, but do so gradually, most often so incrementally that the change is not discernable except at a distance of reflection of many years, or even centuries. Hence, what we in Western languages usually refer to as *Modernity* has its antecedents in the rebirth in Western Europe of the ancient Greco-Roman culture, the Renaissance of the 15th-16th centuries, and the simultaneous discovery by westerners of the New World, and that the world is a globe. However, historians usually mark the 18th-century Enlightenment, *die Aufklärung*, as the beginning of Modernity—in German, *die Neuzeit*. It is clearly with the 18th- century *Aufklärung*, as well as what German scholars call *die Spät-Aufklärung*, running through the first third of the 19th century, that we from the perspective of two centuries later can discern a major paradigm shift starting in the West, and subsequently spreading over the entire globe.

The 18th century is often also called—with justification—the “Age of Reason,” which brought the proclamation of Liberty and Human Rights.⁵ It must be recalled, however, that even in its midst there arose “*Sturm und Drang*” with its emphasis on the imagination, emotions, and love of history, and that the *Spät-Aufklärung* also saw the launch of Romanticism with its stress on the dynamic, evolutionary, and the development of “scientific history.” Here we have three of the core characteristics of Modernity: Freedom, Reason, Dynamism/sense of History. It is also here in the *Spät-Aufklärung* that we find the burgeoning roots of the Modernity’s fourth core characteristic: Dialogue.

II. The Cosmic Dance of Dialogue

All of us present or those reading my words, are generally familiar with the rise of freedom and reason being seen as at the heart of being human, along with a sense of

⁵The modern understanding and implementation of human freedoms and rights stem from the American experience. They were clearly articulated in the June 12, 1776 Virginia Constitution: “All men are by nature equally free and independent, and have certain inherent rights.... All power is vested in, and consequently derived from, the people.” Richard L. Perry, ed., *Sources of Our Liberties* (Chicago: American Bar Foundation, rev. ed., 1978), p. 311—treated in detail in Leonard Swidler, “Human Rights: A Historical Overview,” in Hans Küng and Jürgen Moltmann, eds. *Concilium An International Review of Theology*, 228 (1990, 2); also in: French, German, Dutch, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese editions. “De mensenrechten: een historische schets, *Concilium Internationaal tijdschrift voor theologie*, 228 (1990, 2), pp. 19-28. “Die Menschenrechte: Ein geschichtliche Überblick,” *Concilium Ein internationaler Zeitschrift von Theologie*, 228 (1990, 2), pp. 98-104. “Les droits de l’homme,” *Concilium Revue internationale de théologie*, 228 (1990, 2), pp. 19-31.

history, evolution, the dynamic likewise being a constitutive part of our humanness.⁶ However, Dialogue has only more recently been seen by many as an essential part of Modernity. Hence I would like to spell out in somewhat more detail what Dialogue is and how it likewise lies not only at the base of our humanity, but, indeed, even at the very foundation of the Cosmos!

As we know, “dialogue” comes from the Greek *dia-logos*, usually explained as meaning “word” (*logos*) across, between, together (*dia*). This is accurate enough, but really not fully so. The *Ur*-meaning of *logos* is “thinking.” Thus we have in English (and German) the term “logic,” and a myriad of words ending in *logos*: theology, geology, psychology, anthropology....., all meaning the “study” of, the “thinking about,” a particular subject. Hence, *Dialogue* fundamentally means “thinking together.”

However, this pattern which is so central to humanity is but a higher reflection of a core part of the entire Cosmos, starting at its very foundation, and rising to humanity—and many religions, including Christianity, would say, even to its Source and Goal, Ultimate Reality, which they claim is essentially Dialogic in a Triune fashion.

Dialogue—understood in the broadest manner as the mutually beneficial interaction of differing components—is at the very heart of the Cosmos, of which we humans are the highest expression: From the basic interaction of matter **and** energy (in Einstein’s unforgettable formula, $E=MC^2$; energy equals mass times the square of the speed of light), to the creative interaction of protons **and** electrons in every atom, to the vital symbiosis of body **and** spirit in every human, through the creative dialogue between woman **and** man, to the dynamic relationship between individual **and** society. Thus, the very essence of our humanity is dialogical, and a fulfilled human life is the highest expression of the *Cosmic Dance of Dialogue*.

In the early millennia of the history of humanity, as we spread outward from our starting point in central Africa, the forces of *divergence* were dominant. However, because we live on a globe, in our frenetic divergence we eventually began to encounter each other more and more frequently. Now the forces of stunning *convergence* are becoming increasingly dominant. In the past, during the Age of Divergence, we could live in isolation from each other; we could ignore each other. Now, in the Age of Convergence, we are forced to live in one world. We increasingly live in a global village. We cannot ignore the Other, the different. Too often in the past

⁶For further detail on the sense of history and other core characteristics of Modernity see Leonard Swidler, *Club Modernity . For Reluctant Christians* (Philadelphia, PA: The Ecumenical Press, 2011).

we have tried to make over the Other into a likeness of ourselves, often by violence, but this is the very opposite of dialogue. This egocentric arrogance is in fundamental opposition to the *Cosmic Dance of Dialogue*. It is not creative; it is destructive. Hence, we humans today have a stark choice: dialogue, or death!⁷

III. Dialogues of the Head, Hands, Heart in Holistic Harmony of the Holy Human

Because we humans are self-reflecting/self-correcting beings, we are capable of **Dialogue**, self-transforming dialogue. There are for us four main dimensions to **Dialogue**, corresponding to the structure of our humanness: Dialogue of the **Head**, Dialogue of the **Hands**, Dialogue of the **Heart**, Dialogue of **Holiness**.

a) The Cognitive or Intellectual: Seeking the Truth—Dialogue of the Head

In the **Dialogue of the Head** we mentally reach out to the Other to learn from those who think differently from us. We try to understand how they see the world and why they act as they do. The world is far too complicated for any of us to understand alone; we can increasingly understand reality only with the help of the Other in dialogue. This is vital, because how we *understand* the world, determines how we *act* in the world.

b) The Illative or Ethical: Seeking the Good—Dialogue of the Hands

In the **Dialogue of the Hands** we join together with Others to work to make the world a better place in which we all must live together. Since we can no longer live separately in this One World, we must work jointly to make it not just a house, but a home for all of us to live in. Stated other, we join hands with the Other to heal the world. The world within us, and all around us, always is in need of healing (Hebrew: *tikkun olam*, “healing the world”), and our deepest wounds can be healed only together with the Other, only in dialogue.

c) The Affective/Aesthetic: Seeking the Beautiful, Spiritual—Dialogue of the Heart

In the **Dialogue of the Heart** we open ourselves to receive the Beauty of the Other. Because we humans are body and spirit, or rather, body-spirit, we give bodily-spiritual expression in all the Arts to our multifarious responses to life: Joy, sorrow, gratitude, anger...and most of all, love. We try to express our inner feelings, which grasp reality in far deeper and higher ways than we are able to put into rational concepts and words;

⁷See Leonard Swidler, with John Cobb, Monika Hellwig, and Paul Knitter, *Death or Dialogue: From the Age of Monologue to the Age of Dialogue* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990).

hence, we create poetry, music, dance, painting, architecture...the expressions of the Heart. All the world delights in beauty, and so it is here that we find the easiest encounter with the Other, the simplest door to dialogue; through the beauty of the Other we most easily enter into the Other. Here, too, is where the depth, spiritual, mystical dimension of the human spirit is given full rein. As the 17th-century mathematician and philosopher Blaise Pascal said, *Le cœur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît point*. “The heart has its reasons, which reason knows not.”⁸

d) Holiness: Seeking the One—Dialogue of the Holy

We humans cannot live a divided life. If we are even to survive, let alone flourish, we must “get it all together.” We must not only dance the dialogues of the **H**ead, **H**ands, and **H**ear, but also bring our various parts together in **H**armony (a fourth “**H**”) to live a **H**olistic (a fifth “**H**”), life, which is what religions mean when they say that we should be **H**oly (a sixth “**H**”—“**H**oly” comes from the Greek *Holos*, to be whole!⁹). **Hence, we are authentically Human** (a seventh “**H**”) only when our manifold elements are in dialogue within each other, and we are in dialogue with the others around us. We must dance together the *Cosmic Dance of Dialogue* of the **H**ead, **H**ands, and **H**ear, **H**olistically,¹⁰ **in Harmony** within the **H**oly **H**uman.

In some ways, the *aesthetic/spiritual* (“Dialogue of the Heart”) area, would seem the most attractive, especially to those with a more interior, mystical, psychological bent. Moreover, it promises a great degree of commonality: the mystics appear to all meet together on a high level of unity with the Ultimate Reality no matter how it is described, including even in the more philosophical systems, e.g., Neoplatonism. For instance, the greatest of the Muslim Sufis, Jewish Kabbalists, Hindu Bhaktas, Christian Mystics, Buddhist Bodhisattvas and Platonist Philosophers all seem to be at one in

⁸Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, 1669, Pensée 277.

⁹The term “Holy” is related to “salvation, and in its Latin form, *salvatio*, it comes from the root “*salus*” (the Greek form is *soterion/soteria* from *saos*), meaning wholeness, health or well-being—hence, such English terms as “salutary,” “salubrious,” “salute”.... The same is true of the Germanic root of the word, *Heil*, “salvation,” which as an adjective is *heilig*, “holy”—whence the English cognates: health, hale, heal, whole, holy. To be “holy” means to be “whole,” to lead a whole, a full life. When we lead a whole, full life, we are holy, we attain salvation, wholeness, (w)holiness. Indeed, for German-speaking Christians Yeshua (Jesus in Hebrew), is called our *Heiland*, Savior.

The very name of Yeshua has very interesting significance in this regard. The name of *Yeshua* is made up of two parts. The first part, “Ye” is an abbreviated form of the Hebrew proper name for God, *Yahweh*. The second part, *shua*, is the Hebrew word for salvation. Where the root meaning of the Indo-European words for salvation is fullness, wholeness, the root meaning of the Semitic word used here, “*shua*,” is that of capaciousness, openness. Salvation then means the opposite of being in straits; it means being free in wide open space. This makes it close to, though not precisely the same as, the Indo-European root meaning.

¹⁰Those who know Western Medieval Philosophy will recognize that these are the “Metaphysicals,” the four aspects of *Being Itself* perceived from different perspectives: The *One*, the *True*, the *Good*, the *Beautiful*.

their striving for an experience of unity with the One, which in the West is called God, *Theos*.

At times the image is projected of God as being the peak of the mountain that all humans are climbing by way of different paths. Each one has a different *way* (*hodos* in Christian Greek; *halachah* in Jewish Hebrew; *shar'ia* in Muslim Arabic; *marga* in Hindu Sanskrit; *tao* in Chinese Taoism and Confucianism; *to* in Japanese Shinto) to reach *Theos*—*Brahman*, *Shang-Ti*...—but all are centered on the one goal. Consequently, such an interpretation of religion or ideology can be called *theocentric*.

Attractive as is theo-centrism, one must be cautious not to waive the varying understandings of God aside as if they were without importance; they can make a significant difference in human self-understanding, and hence how we act toward our selves, each other, the world around us, and the Ultimate Source. Moreover, a “theo-centric” approach has the disadvantage of not including non-theists in the dialogue. This would exclude not only atheistic Humanists, but also non-theistic Theravada Buddhists, who do not deny the existence of God, but rather understand ultimate reality in a non-theistic, non-personal manner (theism posits a “personal” God, *Theos*). One alternative way to include these partners in the dialogue, even in this area of “spirituality,” is to speak of the search for ultimate meaning in life, for “salvation” (recall: *salus* in Latin, meaning a salutary, whole, [w]holy life; similarly, *soteria* in Greek), however it is understood, as what all humans have in common in the “spiritual” area, theists and non-theists. As a result, we can speak of a *soterio-centrism*.

In the *ethical*, the *active* area (Dialogue of the Hands”) dialogue has to take place in a fundamental way on the underlying principles for action which motivate each tradition. Once again, many similarities will be found, but also differences, which will prove significant in determining the several communities’ differing stands on various issues of personal and social ethics. It is only by carefully and sensitively locating those underlying ethical principles for ethical decision-making (this is what a *Global Ethic* is—a whole separate lecture for another time) that later misunderstandings and unwarranted frustrations in specific ethical issues can be avoided. Then specific ethical matters, such as sexual ethics, social ethics, ecological ethics, medical ethics, can become the focus of interreligious, interideological dialogue—and ultimately joint action where it has been found congruent with each tradition’s principles and warranted in the concrete circumstances.

It is, however, the *cognitive* (“Dialogue of the Head”) area which is the most central and at the same time the most challenging. When we speak of dialogue, most often we mean this Dialogue of the Head, seeking the Truth by way of dialogue. In brief, in this central area, dialogue means that “I want to talk with you who think differently from me so *I* can learn.” This is a radical shift from the default position of saying that “I want to talk with you who think differently from me so I can teach you the truth which I already have and you obviously don’t—otherwise you would think like me!” Said other: until recently we all talked only with persons who, either thought as we do, or who should! We engaged in, not *dialogue*, but *monologue*. Increasingly today, however, we want to talk with those who think differently from us so *we* can learn. We increasingly engage in dialogue! How did this incredible shift occur?

IV. Why Dialogue Arose

One can, of course, point to recent developments that have contributed to the rise of dialogue—e.g., growth in mass education, communications, and travel, a world economy, threatening global destruction—nevertheless, a major underlying cause is a paradigm-shift in the West in how we perceive and describe the world. A paradigm is simply the model, the cluster of assumptions, on whose basis phenomena are perceived and explained: For example, the geocentric paradigm for explaining the movements of the planets; a shift to another paradigm—as to the heliocentric—will have a major impact. Such a paradigm-shift has occurred and is still occurring in the Western understanding of truth statements which has made dialogue not only possible, but even necessary.

Whereas the understanding of truth in the West was largely absolute, static, monologic or exclusive up to the 19th century, it has subsequently become deabsolutized, dynamic, and dialogic—in a word: relational. This relatively “new” view of truth came about in at least six different but closely related ways.

0) Until the 19th century in Europe truth, i.e., a statement about reality, was conceived in an absolute, static, exclusivistic either-or manner. It was believed that if a statement was true at one time, it was always true in exactly the same way. Such is a *classicist* or *absolutist* view of truth. Remember, the word “absolute” means “un-limited.”

1) **Historicism:** Then, in the 19th century scholars came to perceive all statements as being partially products of their historical circumstances; only by placing truth statements in their historical *Sitz im Leben* could they be properly understood: A text

could be understood only in *context*. Therefore, all statements were seen to be de-absolutized in terms of time, that is, limited by time. Such is a *historical* view of truth.

2) **Intentionality**: Later on it was noted that we ask questions so as to obtain knowledge, truth, according to which we want to live; this is a *praxis* or *intentional* view of truth, that is, a statement has to be understood in relationship to the action-oriented intention of the thinker who poses the question that is being answered—and is thereby further limited.

3) **Sociology of knowledge**: Just as statements of truth were seen by some thinkers to be historically deabsolutized in time (text can be understood only in historical *context*), so too, starting with 20th century, scholars like Karl Mannheim, there developed what he called the “Sociology of Knowledge,” which points out that every statement is perspectival, for all reality is perceived, and spoken of, from the cultural, class, sexual, and so forth perspective of the perceiver. Such is a *perspectival* view of truth—thereby once more limiting a “truth, a statement about reality.”

4) **Limitations of language**: A number of thinkers, and most especially Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951), uncovered the limitations of human language: Every description of reality is necessarily only partial, for although reality can be seen from a limitless number of perspectives, human language can express things from only one perspective at once. This partial and limited quality of all language is necessarily greatly intensified when one attempts to speak of the Transcendent, which by “definition” “goes-beyond.” Such is a *language-limited* view of truth.

5) **Hermeneutics**: The contemporary discipline of hermeneutics—led by Bernard Lonergan,(1904-1984),¹¹ Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002),¹² Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005)¹³— stresses that all knowledge is interpreted knowledge. This means that in all knowledge *I* come to know something; the object comes into me in a certain way, namely, through the lens that I use to perceive it. As Thomas Aquinas wrote, *Cognita sunt in cognoscente secundum modum cognoscentis*,¹⁴ “Things known are in the knower according to the mode of the knower.” Such is an *interpretative* view of truth.

¹¹For general information see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernard_Lonergan. His major works were *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (1957); and *Theological Method* (1972).

¹²For general information see, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gadamer>. Hans-Georg Gadamer’s *magnum opus* was, *Truth and Method*. 2nd rev. ed., trans. J. Weinsheimer and D.G. Marshall (New York: Crossroad, 1989).

¹³For general information see, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Ric%C5%93ur. Paul Ricoeur’s more influential work was, *Time and Narrative (Temps et Récit)*, 3 vols. trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellae. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984, 1985, 1988 [1983, 1984, 1985]).

¹⁴Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, Q. 1, a. 2.

6) Dialogue: A further development of this basic insight is that I learn not by being merely passively open or receptive to, but by being *in dialogue* with, extra-mental reality. Reality can “speak” to me only with the language that I give it; the “answers” that I receive back from reality will always be in the language, the thought categories, of the questions I put to it. If and when the answers I receive are sometimes confused and unsatisfying, then I probably need to learn to speak a more appropriate language when I put questions to reality. For example, if I ask the question, “How heavy is green?” of course I will receive a non-sense answer. Or, if I ask questions about living things in mechanical categories, I will receive confusing and unsatisfying answers. I will likewise receive confusing and unsatisfying answers to questions about human sexuality if I use categories that are solely physical-biological. (Witness the absurdity of the answer that birth control is forbidden by the natural law—the question falsely assumes that the nature of humanity is merely physical-biological.) Such an understanding of truth is both necessarily limited and a *dialogic* understanding.

In brief, our understanding of truth and reality has been undergoing a radical shift. The new paradigm which is being born understands all statements about reality to be historical, praxial or intentional, perspectival, language-limited or partial, interpretive, and dialogic. Our understanding of truth statements, in short, has become “deabsolutized”—it has become “relational,” that is, all statements about reality are now seen to be *related* to the historical context, praxis intentionality, perspective, etc. of the speaker, and in that sense no longer “absolute” un-limited. Therefore, if my perception and description of the world is true only in a limited sense, that is, only as seen from my place in the world, then if I wish to expand my grasp of reality I need to learn from others what they know of reality that they can perceive from their place in the world that I cannot see from mine. That, however, can happen only through dialogue.

V. “*Nobody Knows Everything about Anything!*”¹⁵

Hence, now in the dawning “Age of Global Dialogue” we humans are increasingly aware that we cannot know everything about anything. This is true for the physical sciences: No one would claim that s/he knows everything about biology, physics.... No one would claim that s/he knows everything about the human sciences, sociology, or anthropology, or— good heavens, economics (!)—and each of these disciplines is endlessly complicated. To repeat: “*Nobody* knows *Everything* about *Anything!*”

¹⁵See: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nu4ssQHRLP0>, reflections at the Scottish Parliament, March 19, 2009.

However, when it comes to the most comprehensive, most complicated discipline of all—religion, which attempts to provide an explanation of not just part of reality as the various physical, social, and human sciences do, but of the *totality* of reality—billions still claim that we know all there is to know, and whoever thinks differently is simply mistaken! But, if it is true that we always can only know partially in any limited study of reality, as in the physical, social, or human sciences, surely it is all the more true of religion, which is an “explanation of the *ultimate* meaning of life, and how to live accordingly, based on some notion and experience of the Transcendent.”¹⁶ We must then be even more modest in our claims of knowing better in this most comprehensive field of knowledge, religion, “the *ultimate* meaning of life.”

Because of the work of the great thinkers mentioned before—Bernard Lonergan, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and Paul Ricoeur—we now also realize that no knowledge can ever be completely objective, for we the knower are an integral part of the process of knowing. In brief, *all knowledge is interpreted knowledge*. Even in its simplest form, whether I claim that the Bible is God’s truth, or the Qur’an, or the Gita, or, indeed, the interpretation of the pope, Martin Luther,... it is *I* who affirm that it is so. But, if neither I nor anyone else can know everything about anything, including most of all the most complicated claim to truth, religion, how do I proceed to search for an ever fuller grasp of reality, of truth? The clear answer is *dialogue*.

In dialogue I talk with you primarily so that *I* can learn what I cannot perceive from my place in the world, with my personal lenses of knowing. Through your eyes I see what I cannot see from my side of the globe, and *vice versa*. Hence, dialogue is not just a way to gain more information. *Dialogue is a whole new way of thinking*. We are painfully leaving behind the “Age of Monologue” and are, with squinting eyes, entering into the “Age of Global Dialogue.”

VI. The *Virtue*, the *Way* of Deep-Dialogue/Critical-Thinking/Complementary Cooperation¹⁷

After the fall of Communism in 1990 Dialogue was suddenly catapulted from relative obscurity to prominence, and consequently the term tended to be over-extended. In order to make clear that I was speaking about Dialogue as a deep, life-transforming

¹⁶See Swidler and Mojzes, *The Study of Religion* for greater detail. When defining “religion” I also wrote of those “explanations of the ultimate meaning of life, and how to live accordingly” which are not based on a notion of the Transcendent, and suggested that they be referred to as “ideologies.”

¹⁷It should also be noted that up to now I have used the term **Dialogue** rather than **Deep-Dialogue**, let alone **Critical-Thinking** and **Complementary-Cooperation**.

enterprise, I started to use the term **Deep-Dialogue**. About the same time I also became convinced that **Critical-Thinking** must accompany **Deep-Dialogue**, and subsequent to those two, **Complementary-Cooperation** must carry transformed relational thought into relational action. Hence, dialogue, **Deep-Dialogue/Critical-Thinking/Complementary-Cooperation**, is not simply another technique to be utilized, but is a *Way* of encountering and understanding Oneself, the Other, and the World at the deepest levels, grasping the fundamental meaning of life, individually and communally, and then acting relationally. (I use the term *Way* because that is how what we in the West call religions usually name themselves—*hodos* in Christian Greek; *halachah* in Jewish Hebrew; *shar'ia* in Muslim Arabic; *marga* in Hindu Sanskrit; *magga* in Buddhist Pali; *tao* in Chinese Taoism and Confucianism; *to* in Japanese Shinto.) This in turn transforms the *Way* we deal with Ourselves, Others, and the World. **Deep-Dialogue/Critical-Thinking/Complementary-Cooperation** has recently slowly begun to emerge from the centuries of largely negative encounters of the differing *Ways*. The increasingly positive *Ways-Encounters* are leading us to see that there is a deeper *common ground* out of which the various *Ways* rise, namely, our very humanness, our body-spirit which, against the background of the massive Cosmos, fragilely, almost wraith-like sways within the whole *Cosmic Dance of Dialogue*.

One of many well-known places where this underlying **Deep-Dialogue** is spelled out is at the beginning of the Bible (Gen 1:26): “And God made humans in God’s image [*Imago Dei* in St. Jerome’s Latin translation].” One part of us is our amazing, but nevertheless earthly-limited body. “And God took some *adamah* [Hebrew for ‘earth’] and breathed his spirit [*ruach*] into it and created *ha adam* [literally ‘the earthling’—not the ‘male’].” The other part of us is our limitless spirit (God’s *ruach*). The Bible had it universally correct here, that every human is an *Imago Dei* in that we are God-like, limit-less, in-finite in our spirit (*ruach*), always reaching beyond! As we today gain ever more access to this deeper source of all cultural life and experience, it becomes increasingly evident that we humans are in the midst of a profound self-transformation, maturation of our very humanness—which is a “work in progress.”

We humans are centrally involved in shaping our own experience, in how we perceive, and then act accordingly in the world. We are shaped by our cultures, but we also in turn shape our cultures by how we think about our experience. A great lesson in global evolution is that our cultural realities are directly affected by our thought. We are slowly learning that if we remain turned only inward, we will be trapped in our own limited egos; when we then encounter persons from other cultures we are likely to react with violence toward the Other—and all will suffer.

At the same time, this insight shows that the more we self-transform and awaken to **Deep-Dialogue/Critical-Thinking/Complementary-Cooperation** *Ways* of thought and living, the more we flourish in our personal and communal lives. It is gradually becoming clear that we have been in a painful struggle of maturation out of *monological* into deep-*dialogical* critical-thinking complementary-cooperative *Ways* of being. All the great religious, spiritual, rational, scientific, moral, and political advances in the cultural evolution of the past can now be seen as part of the maturation from a monological mindset and practice toward the *Virtue* of **Deep-Dialogue/Critical-Thinking/Complementary-Cooperation**.

It is vital to note that **Deep-Dialogue**, its counterpart **Critical-Thinking**, and their implementation, **Complementary-Cooperation**, are *Virtues*, which means that they are not acquired in a flash. *Virtues* are *habitual* ways of acting. For example, the person who has developed the virtue of Courage reacts *habitually*, that is, “automatically,” in a courageous manner when a challenge arises. So too, a **Deep-Dialogue/Critical-Thinking/Complementary-Cooperation** mentality/practice needs to be inculcated to operate *habitually*; it needs to become a *Virtue*—a *Way* of life which helps persons and communities flourish by self-transforming from a monological mindset through creative, positive *Ways-Encounters*. *Virtues*, as said, cannot be developed overnight. They must be painstakingly practiced, reflected on, and practiced, until they become second nature. We must eventually learn to live the *Virtue*, the *Way* of **Deep-Dialogue/Critical-Thinking/Complementary-Cooperation**.

VII. Critical-Thinking, the Obverse of Deep-Dialogue

A further word must be said about the obverse of **Deep-Dialogue, Critical-Thinking**. It cannot be too strongly stressed that in order to open ourselves to **Deep-Dialogue** we must also develop the skill of thinking clearly and carefully, the *Virtue* of **Critical-Thinking** (recall: *critical*, from the Greek, *krinein*, means to judge, to choose). We need to answer three questions: *What? Whence? Whither?*

1. *What?* We must understand what we (and others) *really* mean when we hear or say something,

2. *Whence* comes the evidence saying something, so as to “judge,” to “decide” where we think truth is?

3. *Whither* do the implications lead?

It might seem over-obvious to state in number 1. that we need to understand *precisely* what we mean when we say or hear something. However, it is most often here at the very beginning that the greatest confusion arises. What a vast amount of time and energy is wasted and confusion is spread abroad because we often do not know *precisely* what a term or phrase means when we or another uses it, or because we use the same term more than once but understand it differently each time. It is even more deleterious when we often inadvertently slip into 4-term syllogisms, and thus confuse ourselves and our listeners/readers. We use a word in an initial statement, and then when using it in a 2nd statement, without noticing it, give it a different meaning, and then attempt to draw a conclusion therefrom!

In addition to addressing these three questions, **Critical-Thinking** entails at least these additional points:

4. Presuppositions: We must raise our *pre*-suppositions from the *un*-conscious to the conscious level— only then can we deal with them rationally, deciding for, against, or part for/part against;

5. Our View: We must realize that *our* view of reality is *a* view, that though it shares much with others' views of reality, it is also partially shaped by our personal lenses through which we experience and interpret reality, and hence is not absolute but perspectival;

6. Context: We must learn to understand all statements in *their* context, i.e., a text can be correctly understood only in *its* context—only then will we be able to translate the original core of the statements/texts into *our* context.

This process of **Critical-Thinking**, then, entails a dialogue within our own minds. Hence, at its root **Critical-Thinking** is dialogic, and **Deep-Dialogue** at its root entails clear, critical thought. **Deep-Dialogue** and **Critical-Thinking** are two sides of the coin of Humanity.

VIII. Islam Enters the Dialogue

Christians and Muslims together make up more than half of the world. Hence, the commitment, or non-commitment of Christians and Muslims to dialogue has a massive affect on the entire world. In fact, many Protestant and Orthodox Christians began to engage in dialogue with each other a hundred years ago, but when invited,

the Vatican repeatedly rejected the offer, and even forbade its members to join in dialogue. All that radically changed with Vatican II (1962-65). There the Catholic Church institutionally committed itself to dialogue fully: The Church “exhorts *all the Catholic faithful* to recognize the signs of the times and to take an active and intelligent part in the work of ecumenism [dialogue].” Not being content with this exhortation, the bishops went on to say that, “in ecumenical work, [all] Catholics must...make the *first approaches* toward them [non-Catholics].” In case there were some opaque minds or recalcitrant wills out there, the bishops once more made it ringingly clear that ecumenism [and interreligious, interideological dialogue] “involves the whole Church, faithful and clergy alike. It extends to everyone.”¹⁸

I mention the Muslims at this point because in the wake of 9-11, and to a significant degree because of 9-11, Islam is now entering into the Dialogue. The embrace of the “Global Interreligious Dialogue” by Islam came 1st from 138 Muslim scholars and religious leaders from around the world on October 13, 2007, when they issued the amazing letter “A Common Word Between Us,” inviting the pope and other Christians leaders and scholars to join with them in Dialogue (see: www.acommonword.com).¹⁹

Then, onto the stage of Interreligious Dialogue strode King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia—the very heartland of conservative Islam! Having met with Pope Benedict XVI on November 6, 2007, (www.saudi-us-relations.org/articles/2007/ioi/071106-abdullah-benedict.html), King Abdullah launched a *World Conference on Dialogue* with all the religions of the world in Spain, the land of the medieval “Golden Age” of interreligious dialogue (*Convivencia*—www.saudi-us-relations.org/articles/2008/ioi/080719-madrid-declaration.html) on July 16, 2008. Further, King Abdullah supported, and even lent his name, to the establishment of the *King Abdullah Center for the Study of Contemporary Islam and the Dialogue of Civilizations* within Imam University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The very name communicates a profound commitment. It sends a loud and clear message, that *if you wish to be serious Muslim* in the contemporary world, *you need to be involved in Dialogue* with the other civilizations of the world!

¹⁸Vatican II, *Decree on Ecumenism*, 4,5

¹⁹This was quickly followed up by a major scholarly conference at Yale University, which also deliberately included Jewish scholars: “The ‘Common Word’ letter was drafted by Muslim leaders and addressed specifically to leaders of ‘Christian churches everywhere’ in order to address concrete issues and problems between Christians and Muslims.... Given the extent, however, to which Jewish concerns are intertwined with those of Christians and Muslims, and given the historic Christian and Muslim tendency inappropriately to exclude the Jewish community, we are deeply committed to seeking out Jewish leaders and scholars to play a central role in the ongoing Common Word dialogue.” Andrew Saperstein, Rick Love, and Joseph Cumming, “Answers to Frequently Asked Questions Regarding the Yale Response to ‘A Common Word Between Us and You,’” Miroslav Wolf, Ghazi bin Muhammad, and Melissa Yarrington, eds., *A Common Word* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), pp. 179f.

As an initial down payment on that pledge, the *King Abdullah Center* recently sent 14 professors of Islamics from Imam University to study dialogue and democracy with my *Dialogue Institute* at Temple University, Philadelphia, USA. We have continued to train more and more Muslim nations and groups in interreligious dialogue. From my global experience in Indonesia, Malaysia, Bangladesh, India, Azerbaijan, Iraqi Kurdistan, Lebanon, Egypt I see global Islam joining the Global Interreligious Dialogue analogously as did Catholicism at Vatican II.

IX. Concluding Encouragement

In conclusion, encouragement can be drawn from a, for some perhaps unexpected source, the Vatican Curia. The “Secretariat for Dialogue with Unbelievers” wrote that even “doctrinal dialogue should be initiated with courage and sincerity, with the greatest freedom and with reverence.” It then continued with a statement that is mind-jarring in its liberality: “Doctrinal discussion requires perceptiveness, both in honestly setting out one’s own opinion and in recognizing the truth everywhere, *even if the truth demolishes one so that one is forced to reconsider one’s own position, in theory and in practice, at least in part.*” The Secretariat then stressed that “in discussion the truth will prevail by no other means than by the truth itself. Therefore, the liberty of the participants must be ensured by law and revered in practice.”²⁰ These are dramatic words—which should be applicable not only to Catholics but in general.

The conclusion from these reflections, I believe, is clear: Interreligious, interideological dialogue is absolutely necessary in our contemporary world. Again, every religion and ideology can make its own several official statements from the Catholic Church about the necessity of dialogue, starting with Pope Paul VI in his first encyclical:

Dialogue is demanded nowadays.... It is demanded by the dynamic course of action which is changing the face of modern society. It is demanded by the pluralism of society, and by the maturity man has reached in this day and age. Be he religious or not, his secular education has enabled him to think and speak, and to conduct a dialogue with dignity (Ecclesiam suam, no. 78).

To this the Vatican Curia later added:

All Christians should do their best to promote dialogue between men of every class as a duty of fraternal charity suited to our progressive and adult age.... The willingness to engage in dialogue is the measure and the strength of that general renewal which must be carried out in the Church [read: in every religion and ideology].²¹

²⁰Secretariatus pro Non-credenti, *Humanae personae dignitatem*, August 28, 1968; quoted in full in Austin Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1975), pp. 1007, 1010.

²¹Flannery, *Humanae personae*, p. 1003.